



# NEWS RELEASE

## EUROPE REGIONAL MEDICAL COMMAND

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### ***Changes to EFMP policy affect overseas duty assignments***

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Europe Regional Medical Command Public Affairs

**HEIDELBERG, Germany** –The policy that recommends family travel to overseas assignments based on health care availability in military medical treatment facilities in Europe was recently revised to include care at host nation medical facilities.

Brig. Gen. Carla Hawley-Bowland, Commander of the Europe Regional Medical Command (ERMC), said the revision of the medical policy for the Exceptional Family Member Program in Europe comes at a time when the number of military forces and supporting installations is being reduced.

“The loss of staff and medical facilities limits the number of exceptional family members who can be treated. This policy revision expands the resources that will be available to exceptional family members,” said Hawley-Bowland.

The general explained that the revision was necessary so that recommendations for assignments based on EFMP considerations could be expanded. The change reduces lost duty time and decreases the number of inappropriate assignments because medical services are not available to exceptional family members.

An exceptional family member is a person (child or adult) with any physical, emotional, developmental, or intellectual disability that requires special treatment, therapy, education, training, or counseling. The purpose of EFMP is to identify their special medical and educational needs and determine the availability of services when military and civilian DoD employees are considering future assignments.

“EFMP assists in the assignment coordination process,” said Becky Tucker, ERMC EFMP coordinator, “to ensure that service members and DoD civilians are assigned to locations where

the necessary medical services are available and that sponsors are aware of the availability of these services at their future assignment location.”

Tucker said that EFMP is a mandatory enrollment/screening program that works with military and civilian agencies to provide comprehensive and coordinated medical, educational, housing, community support, and personnel services to families with special needs.

“Before the EFMP policy change, assignment recommendations of medical care for EFMP family members was based on care provided by the military treatment facility,” said Tucker. “This new policy incorporates host-nation hospitals and providers within the TRICARE network and increases the availability of an overseas assignment for personnel with exceptional family members.”

The majority of assignment recommendations made to personnel agencies are to locations where family practice, internal medicine, pediatrics, physical therapy, adult psychiatry, or child psychiatry are available, based on the needs of the family member.

“When a sponsor with exceptional family members receives an overseas assignment they will have to carefully weigh their options,” said Tucker. “We want families to continue to seek overseas assignments but also want them to make informed decisions about assignment options based on the information provided through their personnel offices.”

“The impact of the policy revision is that service members and their families have a wider range of overseas duty location options because of a broader range of medical treatment sources,” said Tucker. Families already enrolled in EFMP will not see changes to their care. Things will stay in place until their next duty assignment, according to Tucker.

However, the policy change does not mean that everyone enrolled in EFMP is eligible for an overseas tour. “Not all families will be allowed to accompany their sponsor on an overseas tour,” said Tucker. “Each case is still reviewed on an individual basis. Sponsors who have exceptional family members must complete all the required forms before an overseas assignment. The screening process includes reviews by medical and educational professionals as well as the gaining command and personnel services,” she explained.

“If a service member’s EFMP case is not approved for an overseas tour there are still options,” said Tucker. “Soldiers may request a deletion of orders, a deferment of orders, or they may accept an ‘all others’ tour, meaning the service member completes an overseas tour without family members.”